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Thursday, March 8, 2018





Opinion Roundup

Thursday, March 6, 2018 -- A round up of opinion, commentary and analysis on: FBI probe opened in Asheville police beating, rise of gun deaths, teachers pay, school safety, energy rate hikes and more.

POLICY & POLITICS

[CHRISTINA CARON: Outrage Over Footage of Police Officer Beating a Black Man in N.C.](#) (New York Times analysis) -- Body camera video showing a black man being Tasered and beaten during a confrontation with two white police officers who accused him of jaywalking has sent shock waves through the western North Carolina city of Asheville, forcing one of the officers to resign, prompting a federal investigation and leading the city's police chief to volunteer to step down. "The city is in outrage," Councilwoman Sheneika Smith said. "Facebook was flaming. It was on fire."

[ALEXANDRIA BORDAS: APD chief says she will quit if asked amid emotional CPAC meeting](#) (Asheville Citizen-Times) -- Police Chief Tammy Hooper said Wednesday night she will quit her job if community members continue to demand it, in order to move past the beating of Johnnie Jermaine Rush by Officer Chris Hickman. Hooper made the announcement during a contentious Citizen Police Advisory Committee meeting, where hundreds of people packed into the Dr. Wesley Grant Sr. Southside Center Auditorium to express their outrage.

[AMES ALEXANDER: FBI opens criminal probe of police beating in N.C.](#) (AP news analysis) -- Federal agents have opened a criminal investigation into a white North Carolina police officer shown on body camera footage beating a

[More people than ever are dying from guns in N.C. What's behind it?](#) (Charlotte Observer analysis) -- North Carolina had more people die from guns in 2016 than any of the previous 35 years, new federal data shows. In the wake of the Florida school shooting, some lawmakers want tougher gun laws. But NC legislators appear unlikely to beef up gun laws.

[TAYLOR KNOFF: By the Numbers: Incarcerating Mental Illness and Addiction](#) (N.C. Health News) -- Legislators are starting the process of reevaluating sentencing guidelines for opioid drug convictions. But, first, they had to get a sense as to who is in the prison population, and they're learning it includes many people with mental health issues.

[JASON PARKER: Forward Cape Fear to provide funding access, training for startups in Eastern NC](#) (WRAL-TV/TechWire) -- A new partnership between Fayetteville State University and the Carolina Small Business Development Fund seeks to change long-term economic outcomes for residents across six counties in the region: Bladen, Cumberland, Harnett, Hoke, Robeson, and Sampson. Forward Cape Fear will address the need for a broader base of successful, innovation-based companies that can benefit from the skills and resources available in the region.

[JULIE TURKEWITZ: In Utah, It's the Donald J. Trump Highway vs. the 'Stormy Daniels Rampway'](#) (New York Times analysis) -- Families visiting America's iconic national parks this summer might be surprised to find a new attraction amid the canyons, cliffs and juniper trees: the Donald J. Trump Utah National Parks Highway. A Utah lawmaker has introduced a bill that would rename the state's most scenic route in honor of the president. Trump, of course, already has his name on plenty of property, and the highway move could prompt a backlash from visitors and corporations, much in the way a North Carolina bathroom bill inspired protests and boycotts. Already, a pair of influential outdoor trade shows have left the state to object to lawmakers' push to shrink the monuments, yanking some \$45 million in annual revenue.

[MARTHA WAGGONER: Testing of old North Carolina rape kits leads to arrest](#) (AP news analysis) -- A man identified by police as a registered sex offender now faces charges of raping two teenagers more than 20 years ago, based on evidence obtained through DNA testing of old sexual assault kits.

CAMPAIGN 2018

[LAURA LESLIE: Dozens of local elections boards paralyzed weeks before primaries](#)(WRAL-TV analysis) -- With primaries two months away, North Carolina's election system remains in legal limbo, and a court order issued Monday scrambled the situation even more.

[MATT FORD: Can States Ban Trump From the Ballot If He Doesn't Release His Tax Returns?](#) (The New Republic analysis) -- Donald Trump owes his presidency to the Electoral College more than any other factor, even Russian interference. This constitutional quirk also gives a hint of irony to an unusual bill passed earlier this week by Maryland's Democratic-controlled State Senate. The senators voted, largely along party lines, to require presidential candidates to file copies of their tax returns with the state board of elections two months

would result in the candidate's removal from the state ballot that November. The bill's target is clear: Trump, who broke a forty-year precedent by refusing to release his tax returns during his campaign.

[3 bad ideas NC legislators might want to put into the state constitution](#)

(Charlotte Observer) -- The NC legislature could soon consider three constitutional amendments, freezing the income tax rate, requiring voter ID and protecting hunting and fishing.

PIPELINE KANGAROO COURT

[Key legislator wants hearing on Cooper pipeline pact](#) (AP news analysis) -- A key Republican legislator wants the General Assembly to dig deeper into a \$58 million agreement between Democratic Gov. Roy Cooper's office and utilities building a natural gas pipeline in eastern North Carolina. Senate Rules Committee Chairman Bill Rabon announced Wednesday he wants the Atlantic Coast Pipeline pact discussed at the next meeting of the legislature's chief oversight committee. There's no date yet.

[WILL DORAN: First an ethics complaint, now maybe hearings on Roy Cooper's \\$58 million pipeline deal](#) (Charlotte Observer analysis) -- North Carolina legislators might try to force Gov. Roy Cooper or his top aides to testify under oath about a controversial agreement his administration negotiated with the Atlantic Coast Pipeline.

EDUCATION

[POLL: N.C. teachers are not paid enough](#) (High Point University Poll) -- An overwhelming majority of North Carolinians don't feel public school teachers are being paid enough and would be willing to pay more taxes to increase their pay. Eighty-five (85) percent of those questioned by the High Point University poll said public school teachers were being paid too little while 73 percent would be willing to pay more taxes to increase their pay.

[SARAH KRUEGER: Nash SROs train to stop a school shooting](#) (WRAL-TV analysis) -- Nash County school resource officers spent Wednesday afternoon receiving training they hope they will never need - handling an active shooter situation at a local school.

[Local officials on teachers and guns](#) (Wilmington Star-News analysis) -- We asked lawmakers and other officials representing Wilmington and beyond where they stand on arming teachers. Here's what they said.

ENERGY & ENVIRONMENT

[TRAVIS FAIN: \\$600M Duke Energy request just the beginning in ongoing rate case](#)(WRAL-TV analysis) -- A \$13 billion electric grid upgrade would boost Duke Energy electric rates in North Carolina well beyond the 16.7 percent base rate increase the company asked state regulators to approve last year.

[SCOTT SEXTON: Nickered-and-dimed by electric bills, rate increases and coal-ash cleanup](#) (Winston-Salem Journal column) -- While a good bit of the rest of the country seemed preoccupied Wednesday with the story of a president and a porn star, I spent the morning looking at my Duke Energy statement — what my grandma used to call her “light bill” — and a pile of papers dealing with

about it.

[ADAM WAGNER: Coal is on the decline, natural gas on the rise at N.C. utilities](#)(Kinston Free Press analysis) -- Coal was responsible for about 60 percent of North Carolina's energy generation in 2006, a number that declined to under 30 percent as of 2016, the most recent full year for which the federal Energy Information Administration has reported data. "Largely, the price of natural gas falling has been the largest catalyst," said Harrison Fell, an energy economist at N.C. State University, who along with colleague Dan Kaffine studied the change while researching an upcoming American Economic Journal paper titled "The Fall of Coal."

[STEPHANIE CARSON: North Carolina has come a long way in improving air quality in recent decades, but is it far enough?](#) (Public News Service analysis) - Recent research published in the Journal of the American Medical Association finds even short-term exposure to air pollution below current standards can lead to premature death. According to Rachel McIntosh-Kastrinsky, manager of Medical Advocates for Healthy Air – part of the group Clean Air Carolina – further reducing air-quality standards would come at a cost to both the public and private sectors, but she's convinced it's worth it in the long run.

... AND MORE

[JEFF GRAVLEY & EVAN MATSUMOTO: Longtime UNC announcer Woody Durham dies at 76, family says](#) (WRAL-TV obit) — Woody Durham, the longtime radio voice of University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill basketball and football, has died, according to his family. Durham, who spent 40 years calling some of UNC's most memorable sports moments, including 23 football bowl games and 13 men's Final Fours and six national championships, retired in 2011 and began to struggle with his speech soon after. He was diagnosed in 2016 with primary progressive aphasia, a rare brain disorder that affects speech.

[Woody Durham, longtime voice of Tar Heels sports, dies at 76](#) (AP obit) -- Woody Durham, the retired "Voice of the Tar Heels" who called North Carolina football and basketball games for four decades, died Wednesday. He was 76. Son Wes Durham said his father died from complications of the neurocognitive disorder that prevented him from public speaking.

[ANDREW CARTER: Woody Durham, the voice of the Tar Heels, dies at 76](#) (Durham Herald-Sun) -- Woody Durham, whose melodic voice delivered thousands of memories and won tens of thousands of devoted listeners during his 40 years as the radio play-by-play broadcaster for the North Carolina Tar Heels football and men's basketball teams, died early Wednesday morning at his Chapel Hill home, according to his family. He was 76.

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